

Joseph Voce #32  
December 8, 1984

Q: Mr. Voce, where did you grow up? What's your home town?

A: Utica, New York.

Q: When did you first join the Army?

A: In 1936.

Q: What made you want to join the Army then?

A: Well I was with the CCC's and I saw a newsreel about the May Day parade in Hawaii and I wanted to see it and be there. That's why I joined it.

Q: So a little bit of the public relations is what got you in there.

A: Right. It worked real good.

Q: Where did you take your basic training?

A: Actually, my basic training was right in Hawaii. The two months that took me from enlistment to get to Hawaii, 30 days of that was spent aboard ships, from New York, through the Panama Canal, San Francisco, then to Hawaii. The first month was spent at Fort Slocum. We did a little marching but that was not any basic training. The real basic training came at Fort Shafter, out of B-Battery, 64th Coast Artillery.

Q: What was your duties there in the 64th?

A: After I quit cooking in '37, I was with a #4 anti-aircraft gun. I had to take the shell out after they cut the fuse, and put it in the breech to be fired.

Q: What size gun was that?

A: It was a 3-inch anti-aircraft gun.

Q: How long did you continue as a gunner in the 64th?

A: Up until '39. That's when I went to work at the Officers Club.

Q: What did you do there at the Officers Club?

A: I was the bartender at the Officers Club at the time.

Q: Must have been a pretty good job.

A: It was very good.

Q: Probably had a lot of the other guys envy you.

A: Well they all did. Everybody wanted it but few of them could do the job. The only other man up there who could do anything was Ray Bergman. I ran the bar and he ran the dinner, which had to be catered at the time, when we first started. And the officer in charge, he actually didn't do too much. He left everything up to us. But this Captain Powell that came in there from the Philippines, he was there approximately one month when he made Major, and just before the war broke out he made Lt. Col. Then he made Colonel right after that and he was a full star General before he died on us.

Q: During the time you worked at the Officers Club you must have had a chance to observe General Short when he was relaxing.

A: Yeah, he was a very nice man to talk to. He was pleasant and he always seemed to have something on his mind really. The biggest maneuver of peace time was to be pulled on Monday morning, December the 8th. Every man in the Army, Navy, Marine, Air Corps was going on the biggest maneuver peace time ever had, but the Japs stopped it.

Q: What were you doing on the morning of December 7th?

A: On the morning of December 7th, I had \$1500.00 sprawled out across the bar. I was getting ready to go on a picnic after that money was counted, so I could buy out Bill Leader's Bar on a Monday morning; on the 8th.

Q: So I guess events must have put a little crimp in your plan.

A: Yes, it hurt real.

Q: What was the first indication you had, that there was something going on that morning, that was out of the ordinary?

A: Well, the first thing was when the planes were flying overhead and low. Then after the few minutes we heard explosions.

Q: Did the explosions sound like they were close or far away?

A: No, they sounded like they were real close. So from that second on I believe everybody knew there was something wrong but nobody knew what it was until [Lt.] General Short, [Lt.] Col. Powell, Capt. Truman, and Ray Bergman come in off the golf course, that we knew we were at war.

Q: Do you remember how General Short was dressed?

A: I believe he was dressed in kahkies at the time.

Q: Do you remember any conversation that went on with General

Short and his party?

A: The only thing I could recall was to say that General Short told Capt. Truman that we were in trouble and they had to get back to headquarters immediately.

Q: Do you remember how he left?

A: I don't remember how he left. He could have walked; it only takes a few minutes to walk from the Officers Club to his quarters, and another minute to headquarters. Although I believe his car was parked up there.

Q: What did you do then?

A: Then along with all the other men working up there, we tried to block all the windows so no light would be able to get out during the evening. And we were told that the men who were guarding the Officers Club might be trigger happy, and not to go out unless we absolutely had to, because they were afraid the Japs might start landing on the north side of the Island.

Q: What did you think of it?

A: I thought they made a big mistake because it hurt me in more than one way but I guess I wasn't the only one.

Q: So how long did you stay in the Officers Club there?

A: I stayed in the Officers Club until 1942.

Q: I mean that day.

A: Oh, that day, just blocking everything up and all the windows and everything so no light could get out. Then we had to close the bar. We weren't allowed to sell any more whiskey until further orders. The back bar and everything, all the liquor had to be locked up, and the doors all had to be sealed so nobody could get any whiskey.

Q: Well let me ask you something, going back to the evening before, that is Saturday, December 6th, were you working at the bar that Saturday night?

A: Yes I was.

Q: Was it a big night? ...usual or light? How was business?

A: Business was good. What we had that night was a party of young Naval officers with, it was either a birthday party or farewell party for one officer who was supposed to leave. That party continued on until about 10:00 that evening before everyone left.

Q: What time did you close up the bar?

A: I closed up the bar after I cashed in and everything, say about 10:30 that evening, I cashed up.

Q: Sounds like it was an early evening.

A: It was.

Q: Was that fairly typical for a Saturday night?

A: Well, the only reason it was closed that early, because these officers were the only ones allowed in that evening for that party. And there was another party at someone else's, some other officers home. So that took care of most of the officers on the Post.

Q: Is a caterer?

A: No, we had our own. In 1940, the Officers Club had their own mess and their own cooks and waiters up there. We stopped catering at that time. Because before that, [Private] Ray Bergman had to take care of all the catering, had to take care of the line up for golf, he had to take care of the trophies that were given out. He had quite a job up there, Ray, at that time.

Q: So on December 7th, how did you spend that night... and where?

A: Most of that night was spent right in at the bar or close to it, because we weren't allowed out. By the time we figured on time to get back to our quarters, we had to go from the outside of the building to get under the building. We were told not to go out because some of the men might be trigger happy.

Q: So, what did you do in the next few days after the attack?

A: Well, the next few days was a matter of routine I believe, outside of the bar being closed. I did uh...help a few officers during the day who had to pack their family up to leave. They asked for help to pack their families up so their families could leave. But I always had to return at the Officers Club by 5:00 at night, because nobody was allowed out after 5:30 unless you were on duty.

Q: Did there seem to be a lot of panic among these families, or were they pretty calm?

A: By the 8th and 9th of December, they were pretty calm, the families. But on the 7th, and a couple of them on the 8th, were a little panicky, but most of them calmed right down on the 8th. But everybody was afraid of a Japanese invasion from the North Shore, because they did destroy Navy installations on the North Shore before they came into the Islands, so nobody could detect them.

Q: So, were there a lot of rumors floating around?

A: Oh yes, there was an awful lot of rumors. Every time, the rumors that they were landing, there was rumors that they were parachuting in. On the night of December 7th, there was rumors that the planes were coming back in. The Navy says they had no planes in the air, so they shot down anything that was flying, and when the Army says they had nothing in the air, they shot down everything that was flying. It took about three days for them to get together to find out who had what planes in the air at the time. I believe they did shoot down one of our B-17s on December 7th, that had come in from the States by mistake, and nobody knew what plane it was.

Q: What was life for you like in weeks and months right after the attack... the first few weeks?

A: Well, the first few weeks after the attack was to watch your step, especially after 5:00 in the evening, because if you stuck your head out someplace, and whoever was on guard duty didn't recognize you, they always take a shot at you. Because there was several shots fired on the 7th, 8th, and 9th, that guards around when somebody started to go outside, everybody was scared. They didn't know if it was a Jap, or an American, or what?

Q: How long did you stay working at the Officers Club there?

A: Until March, 1942.

Q: And where were you assigned after that?

A: After that I went to Schofield Barracks for one week, and then I was reassigned to the [220nd] Signal Supply Depot in Fort Shafter for the remainder of the War.

Q: What memory stands out in your mind as most vivid, about the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7th?

A: Well, I didn't see it on December the 7th. I did see it on December the 8th, when I went to Col. Powell to Hickam Field and Sub-base to see everything.

Q: What did it look like over there?

A: It looked like that there was no way that any man could have survived off of the ships, and off the wrecks of them planes were... if anybody was there they wouldn't have had a chance.

Q: Well thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to come up here and talk with me.

A: It's alright. Thank you.